

Time to put people first in the NHS

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“Focusing on culture is the one thing we can accelerate and energise after the pandemic within the NHS. There has never been a better time to think about the needs of our people and shape of our organisational culture than right now.

“The only people who benefit from adversarial grievance policies and procedures within the NHS, are those who make money from the negative outcomes of adversarial systems - not patients, employees, managers or organisations as a whole,” David Liddle, Founder and CEO of the TCM Group. told an audience of senior NHS HR professionals on Thursday 13th January, at TCM’s Integrating a Transformational Culture within Health & Social Care conference.

“If the costs spent by the NHS on investigations, settlements and protection from employment tribunals was invested in one single month in developing a fair, just, inclusive and high performing culture, you could drive significant change across a massive, complex Trust.”

Shred policies and procedures

At the half-day conference, attended by delegates from across health and social care, David Liddle spoke about the urgent need for a transformational culture within the NHS, including a new model of Transformational Justice, to replace outdated, toxic grievance procedures as a way of tackling conflicts.

“We don’t have to destroy people and their relationships to get a good outcome. If we are serious about culture, let’s get out a shredding machine and shred our policies and procedures. The NHS can never truly call itself a compassionate, just or restorative organisation whilst it retains corrosive and damaging grievance procedures, disciplinary processes and performance systems.”

David presented the conference alongside Nicky Ingham, Executive Director of HMPA, who questioned whether it was right that, despite the two years of turmoil caused by the pandemic, the strong intent within the sector to transform culture had been put on a back burner. Now is the time to drive transformational change – and to adopt new approaches she said. “When something goes wrong we respond by adopting draconian measures that hurt everyone involved. We need to shift the focus away from who’s to blame, to who has been hurt,” she added.

Transformational Trailblazers™

In a bid to understand how best to develop transformational cultures within the health sector, TCM has launched the Transformational Trailblazers initiative. This will involve a cohort of organisations joining a research project to learn together and share challenges, experiences and best practice. Blair Maxwell, Strategic Lead for Transformational Culture at the TCM Group, urged more healthcare organisations to get involved in this ground-breaking project.

“We would like to see organisations across all geographies, sizes and levels of maturity getting

involved,” he said. “They will share a commitment to developing a transformational culture and will take part in ongoing research and analysis, to evaluate the true impact of this new cultural paradigm.”

A new cultural framework

David Liddle added: “Culture is the greatest asset or greatest liability, an organisation has. Corporate culture is widely misunderstood, routinely ignored, yet a potential source of riches when managed well. As such, culture must become the number one strategic priority within the NHS.

“I often work with senior staff dealing with life-threatening injury, yet when we start talking about feelings it strikes fear into their hearts. The glue that has traditionally held often very broken teams together is that they are there for patients, yet even that feels flimsy now as a sense of common purpose. We need to come back to what the shared experience is among teams in the NHS and create a new form of company culture, in which people feel comfortable expressing their feelings, hopes, fears and needs.”

“ TCM’s Transformational Culture Model™ offers a new framework for organisations which are committed to putting their people, purpose and values first. This is driven by transformational leaders who role model the right behaviour, and a people function which is strategic and empowered. These elements are brought together to create cohesion and ultimately deliver the most effective patient care to those in need.”

The TCM Group has helped over 300 NHS trusts and health/social care organisations in transforming the way they respond to conflict. TCM’s Resolution Framework™ offers a collaborative and robust system for resolving complaints, grievances, and disciplinary issues. It balances the right of all parties with their underlying interests and their needs, encouraging the constructive and early resolution of workplace issues, where appropriate.

For more information, interviews or to access a recording of the conference, please contact Erika Lucas at erika@erikalucas.co.uk or Rebecca Griffiths at rebecca@griffithshuntpr.com